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ABSTRACT

Modes of writing utilized within school systems leave little room for students to infuse personal perspectives as objective and formal expression are given higher merit. This approach has marginalized students and created environments not conducive to the process of written expression. Heeding the educational movement of experts in the discipline of reading to treat the making of meaning as an individual action equally dependent upon the reader, the text, and the situation in which the reading of text occurs, writing instruction needs to also accommodate individual attempts to develop meaning: education must integrate students' personal voice. "I-voices" provide students with the means through which identity can be explored and expressed. It promotes such essential writing aspects as personal reality, meaningfulness, ownership, risk taking, and reduces the tendencies for cognitive overload. Employed into the school system, it fosters the environmental mode of instruction as well as a productive form of instructional scaffolding. Seeing with an "I" provides writers with a larger perspective of the world, allowing them to occupy a personal space in it. One Illustration is included; 32 references are attached.) (Author/RS)

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Seeing with an I

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(Abstract) Modes of writing utilized within the school systems leave little room for students to infuse personal perspectives as objective and formal expression are given higher merit. This approach has marginalized students and created environments not conducive to the process of written expression. Heeding the educational movement of experts in the discipline of reading to treat the making of meaning as an individual action equally dependent upon the reader, the text, and the situation in which the reading of the text occurs, writing instruction needs to also accommodate individual attempts to develop meaning: education must integrate students' personal voice. I-voices provide students with the means through which identity can be explored and expressed. It promotes such essential writing aspects as personal reality, meaningfulness, ownership, risk taking, and reduces the tendencies for cognitive overload. Employed into the school system, it fosters the environmental mode of instruction as well as a productive form of instructional scaffolding. Seeing with an I provides writers with a larger perspective of the world, allowing them to occupy a personal space in it.

SOS. Save our students. Scribing is out of sink. Students are oppressed in schools. Somebody ought to do something soon!

It is not news that students have become frustrated in their educational endeavors. Despite all the recent research that has enlightened the styles and the understanding of students' learning process, perfection is not yet in the picture. Students remain disenchanted in their efforts to achieve personal excellence. This phenomena of malcontent is especially prevalent in the area of writing instruction despite the tremendous strides taken since the mid 1970's. "Research has not clearly

established the best approach to take to reduce writing apprehension" (Hillocks, 1986, p. 50-51). Much rethinking about the writing process approach must occur before anyone waves the checkered flag.

Opening Our Eyes: Present Writing Conditions

Improvement of writing instruction draws upon a number of essential issues. When addressing the whole of the problem, consideration must be given to students' voice, ownership and meaningfulness, cognitive aspects, task appropriateness, and also how changes made in the curriculum may affect society. Applebee's (1984) discovery that 67.4% of all English assignments draw upon knowledge provided by either teacher or text, with only 37.6% of the writing reflecting personal experience (p. 44) exemplifies the primary offense of writing instruction today. Students have been marginalized. Their knowledge, intimacies, feelings, and concepts of self are trivialized in the great quest for refined academic written expression. It seems that in the educational movement toward more effective teaching strategies, we have forgotten to recognize the input of students. We neglected to be "concerned that the rhetoric which students learn in many English department classrooms inculcates these individualistic values that can direct them to the margins of society" (Clark, 1990, p. 474). Placing the learner on the periphery has created serious consequences, largely that teachers have stepped into the spotlight, becoming the focus of

erudition. Suggestions that teachers can reduce the mystery surrounding language if the student gains knowledge of symbols, patterns and sentences, the history of the language, and standard English dialects (Thompson, 1979) establishes the role of educators to be the primary source of information, while forcing students to attempt to discover accesses to a teacher's wealth of knowledge. It implies that teachers are omniscient and suggests that students will be illiterate, benighted, and incognizant without the divine intervention of the instructor.

In their attempts to achieve success, students have groped around in the darkness searching endlessly for the key to recognition. What they have found is a temporary means to a tragic end. They have discovered a trick of the trade which is both effortless and safe. Testimony after testimony, students state that they write to please the teacher (Applebee, 1984; Cleary, 1991; Freedman, 1987; Smagorinsky, 1986). Students "become concerned with how the product will look to the teacher, instead of how the process will help them to learn about their topics, their worlds, and themselves" (Smagorinsky, 1986, p. 106). When the teacher is clearly the audience to which students are writing, the consequences of receiving a good grade stem from attempts to meet the demands of the instructor. Those who do, earn the identities of successful writers; those who do not are categorized as failures. Thus writing ceases to be what Anna, a student from Clark's (1990) case study, identifies as ". . . an extension of me personally. It is my point of view supported with the literature of my choosing. It speaks to me as an individual" (p. 464). Writing is no longer a process of creating, but one of borrowing. It becomes a molded image which sacrilegiously reflects the golden statue of the teacher. Students who wish to gain educational prosperity are forced to speak in a muted voice that is not their own.

Discussing aspects of writing instruction always reminds me of an incident which happened when I was in school. A large portion of the student body had staged a protest concerning a lack of student input in the educational doctrines of the university's system. Students collected in the center of campus where they marched with signs in their hands and tape placed over their mouths. I remember stopping to ask one of the protestors what his position was, and what changes did he propose. He attempted a smile behind the band of tape, waved his "Listen to Students' Voices!" sign, and walked off. The incident struck me as highly ironical. My friend was attempting to make his statement, yet he was not allowed to use his own voice to annunciate it. Like an unplayable record, he would never achieve harmony with what he perceived to be a dissonant situation.

How similar are the predicaments in which education places students! Essay assignments are given to students in the hopes that they will demonstrate competence and increase their understanding by expressing their knowledge in an organized, coherent format. Yet students' knowledge does not readily lend itself to the organized, coherent format designated by the teacher. As a result writers experience a cramping of their style of expression and tension as they attempt to mold their message into something which the teacher wishes to hear (Applebee, 1984, pp. 49-50). Many students feel resentment toward the teacher as evaluator when their opinions are devalued, which consequently establishes little personal engagement of students during the process of writing (Cleary; 1991; pp. 58, 13). Even when students are able to structure their expression in the required fashion, frustration often flares when their ideas are impinged upon by "a lot of stupid rules" (Marshall, 1987, p. 41). Nothing can be more counteractive than rules which delineate what you must say, when

and where you must say it, and how it should be said! Mastery of such a complex system of expression certainly deserves an A+. However, the yellow flag should certainly be waved at this situation designed to promote learning. So much compliance often creates students who know "what to produce but not why to produce it" (Applebee, 1984, p. 105) except to please the teacher.

One way to alleviate such turmoil is to allow students to speak with their voice. Brooke (1991) points out, in her book *Writing and Sense of Self*, presently "writing teachers often describe learning to write as either a process of finding a 'voice' or a process of taking on the conventions of a given discourse community" (p. 118). What Brooke (1991), and others, seem to overlook is that the process of writing is establishing a 'voice' and experiencing different discourse communities. It is a process of discovering what you have to say and then applying it to the standards and the philosophy of various modes of writing. Many times students enter a discourse community of literary criticism when they are assigned to write an analysis of literature. Similarly, they become poets, dramatists, or essayists when they are required to personally create works of art. Educators teach the writing process by asking students to mouth the conventions of different communities of written expression behind a band of tape, neglecting to allow students a voice from which they may speak. Giving students a voice is not a new concept, only one which needs to be refined. Students must be given more significant opportunities to use a voice, and that voice with which they speak must be their own.

Gazing Around: Progress in the Reading Discipline

Educational progress in the discipline of reading has begun changing its fundamental beliefs to become more focused on the distinct personalities of each reader. Rosenblatt (1978), in her book *The Reader, The Text, The Poem. The Transactional Theory of Literary Works* presents a fundamental philosophy for this educational metamorphosis. Her ethos, concerning the process of reading, circulate around the trinity of the reader, the text, and the "poem." The reader is actively involved with the text in "building a poem for himself out of his responses to the text" (p. 10). That is to say, the characteristics of the reader interacting with the nature of the text creates a "poem" -- a reading of the coded symbols which is unique to that reader of that text in the particular situation in which it was read. The text remains a constant throughout the interaction, while the reader and the poem are in a continual flux of change. The process is very similar to psychological experimentation done with perceptional organization (See Illustration A). When looking at the print, many envision a white vase on a black background. Still others perceive two silhouettes vis-a-vis against a small background of white. Both images exist simultaneously in the one drawing. What one sees depends on what one is looking for, previous familiarities, and present anticipations (Fetterolf, 1981).

"All reading is carried on in a matrix of experienced meaning: efferent reading gives attention primarily to the referent alone; aesthetic reading places the experienced meaning in the full light of awareness and involves the selective process of creating a work of art" (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 75). This construct illustrates an extremely important aspect. Numerous readings of any given text can and will occur. Different focuses held during the reading process create different outcomes. No one can read a piece of text and walk away with an exact copy of someone else's experience

of that set of words. If the union of reader and text is of the efferent nature, the construction of the poem consists of "information to be acquired, the logical solutions to a problem, the actions to be carried out" (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 23). If the merger is aesthetic, the poem evoked will be what [the reader] is living through during his relationship with that particular text" (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 25). Not only will different people respond in unsimilar manners, but the same reader will have varied reactions to the same text at a different point in time (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 36). Thus, the responses to text depend upon the "individual reader's characteristics (reader context), the specific text being read (text context), and the total situation (situational context)" (Irwin, 1991, p. 5). Each reading of a text is as unique as the myriad of snowflakes which fall to the ground every winter.

While Rosenblatt (1978) describes two modes for experiencing a text, efferent and aesthetic, Beach and Marshall (1991) specify seven types of responses to material being read; engaging, describing, conceiving, explaining, connecting, interpreting, and judging. Engaging is characterized by readers expressing an emotional reaction or demonstrating involvement at some level (Beach & Marshall, 1991, p. 28). This response is quite similar to Rosenblatt's (1978) aesthetic reading where readers exist within the events of a plot. The connecting process is distinguished by readers building associations between aspects of their personal lives and those depicted in the text (Beach & Marshall, 1991, p. 31). In the describing response, readers demonstrate the ability to select information vital to the formation of meaning and are also able to replicate literal information from the written passage (Beach & Marshall, 1991, p. 29). Conceiving is marked by readers "moving beyond the description of information in order to make statements about its meaning" (Beach &

Marshall, 1991, p. 29). When this meaning is created in terms of "social, political, or economic phenomena," it is essential to realize that "such conceptions derive from both the text and the reader" (Beach & Marshall, 1991, p. 31). The explaining response attempts to give reasons for the behavior of characters or the justification of events. During the interpreting mode, readers begin to move beyond the text. They utilize the meaning they have created through the connecting, describing, and conception responses in order to construct a theme or establish "the point" which exists within a text (Beach & Marshall, 1991, p. 132). The last response specified by Beach and Marshall (1991), is judging. In this reading behavior the merit or quality of characters or plot are assessed, and an opinion is stated (p. 33). Essential within each strategy incorporated by the reader to access the meaning of a text is the self of the reader. Engaging and connecting most obviously demonstrate a personal process. Describing, conceiving, and explaining appear to be more objective responses on the surface. However, underlying each step of selecting the important information, making meaning in terms of various phenomena, and the offering of explanations, are the characteristics of the readers. Embedded in all decisions are the readers' values, previous experiences, knowledge base, and cultural and sexual bias. Interpreting and judging, while moving away from the text, draw from meaning created when the personal and textual fuse equally.

The most important facet of acknowledging different types of responses to literature is the accentuation of personal influence. The identity of the reader cannot be divorced from the text just as the responses to a text cannot be isolated from the reader's self. Beach and Marshall (1991) explain the necessity of the responses of the reader:

> We can perhaps see more clearly what readers often do when they are reading literature by considering some of the *strategies* available to them in making sense of a text. Such strategies are ways of responding that we can describe separately -- and that may be employed separately -- but that together comprise a reader's full response to the text being read.
> (Beach and Marshall, 1991, p. 28)

To remove, ignore, or devalue a reader's self or the strategies which allow the self to construct meaning is to rob the reader of a whole experience. This process comes full circle, as Slatoff (1970) points out, "the fullest and deepest experiences of literary involvement may bring about a heightened sense of self" (p. 47). It is from this point that writing instruction must proceed. Each reading becomes a personal experience, and all reactions to the reading -- discussions, compositions -- should be allowed to reflect this originality of experience.

Espying Opportunities: Connections Between Disciplines

There are already a number of sturdy bridges which allow connections to be made across the reading and writing disciplines. On the simplest level, both reading and writing are active procedures used to construct meaning out of textual codes. Buckler (1985) advocates the academic coupling when she states, ". . . the brain's cognitive operations seem to follow the same patterns in reading and writing. . ." (p. 31). In discussing the importance of writing in the classroom, Vacca and Vacca (1989) report: "First, writing improves thinking. Second, it is a valuable tool for learning. *Third, writing is intimately related to reading. One vital way to help students study and comprehend what they read is through the act of composing*" (p. 259, my

italics). Educational developments utilizing this cognitive dyad include the concept of writing to learn, and learning log activities. Since the two processes have an established alliance, it seems justified that experts in the area of writing should heed the progress of reading authorities, acknowledging that writing, like reading, is an *individual* attempt to develop understanding. "If both writing and reading are viewed as constructive processes, then writing about reading should provide students with an opportunity to 'enrich and embellish' the meanings they have tentatively constructed, coming to a fuller possession of what ever the text may hold" (Marshall, 1987, p. 31). If we allow students to read texts with their own eyes, they then must be allowed to speak on their own: education must accommodate students' personal voice.

The demands of students to have their writing frustrations relieved causes a great rift in the philosophical construct of the discipline. It should be noted that the struggling students depicted in the research of Applebee (1984), Cleary (1991), and Freedman (1987), are not isolated individuals. They are not exceptions to the rules. These students are merely a few of the many who illustrate that the rules, those which educators have set for them in regards to the refinement of written expression, are wrong. We ask students to present their ideas, beliefs, and opinions, but we do not let them scribe an essay using the first person point of view. This format is not acceptable in educationally defined "academic writing." The "academic" style requires objectivity, formality, and compliance with the rigid rules of construction. The first person formation may be made to comply with the formality and the rules of composition, but it negates the objective perspective. Educators may claim that objectivity is essential as ". . it means respect; that is the ability not to distort

and to falsify things, personal, and oneself" (Fromm, 1947, p. 105). Yet, it seems in objective attempts not to twist the meaning of truth, the verity of an existence of the writer's self is ignored. Writing objectively may ensure veraciousness about reality, but it misrepresents concepts of individuality. "'Objective, impersonal, and factual' . . . negate [a student's] own experiences and insight. It did not allow [him/her] to engage in dialogue with authorities, neither teachers, textbooks, nor [a student's] potential readers" (Brooke,1991, p. 119).

According to Donald Murray (1985), "what we do in schools is to learn to camouflage I, not be objective but to sound objective" (p. 3). The objectivity which educators perceive to be expressed only thorough the third person is entirely a disillusionment. Asking students to academically address an issue is like asking students to speak in the invisible voice of "one": to speak with a mouth confined by tape. Murray goes on to recommend the acceptance of I in academic writing by drawing an analogy to politics and freedom of speech practiced in journalism:

> Editors were afraid reporters might think as well as observe, come to conclusions, have opinions, start to speak out with individual voices, persuade, influence, stuff like that. Maybe students would do the some of the same things if they were allowed "I." Become fascinated with what "I" was chasing. Discover things they knew. Felt strongly about. Begin to have opinions, voices, stuff like that. If they had an "I."
>
> (Murray, 1985, p. 10)

Allowing students to speak with their voice will be like giving them a new perspective of life through writing. "I" becomes an eye through which students can "develop an understanding of self as writer" (Brooke, 1991, p. 5) and "connect the role of self as writer with other roles in the culture outside the classroom, especially writer's roles in the culture at large -- including roles for the self as reflective thinker and community influencer" (Brooke, 1991, p. 5). Students will be able to see and

understand more easily if they are given an eye through which they are able to explore. It is for this reason that students should be allowed to use their I-voice in the written expressions of academe.

Viewing the Light: Educational Solutions

One strong argument against the utilization of student I-voices is the belief that personal writing is a basic, nonintellectual form of expression in which students demonstrate little difficulty in mastery. "For personal writing allows students to feel good, but not, ultimately, to do well. It creates the illusion of growth but it keeps students back. It keeps them in a state of arrested development. . ." (Wershoven, 1991, p. 35). To allow students to continually engage in this style of language is to negate the possibilities of student growth. It seems there must be elements of conflict followed by resolution if progress is to be made. Certainly, this belief incorporates a primal myth that the role of a teacher is to make students suffer. It also embodies an oversimplification of a discourse community which most students have been intimately familiar with since they began telling about their day's adventures at the dinner table. Plainly, a redefinition and evaluation of personal writing must transpire. Students' I-voices need to be seen and heard as a measure through which they may access more challenging writing concepts as well as continue to develop metacognitive learning strategies. The first step in removing the tape from our students' mouths is to begin to see the merit of personal writing, be it narrative, personal analytical writing, or anything in between.

Seeing the merit. Personal writing, or writing spoken with an I-voice establishes a reality for students, creates meaningfulness, and ultimately allows students to better comprehend language and literature. One goal for our students is to help them identify reality in a world of swirled confusion. Not only must we wish them to speak in order to clarify any disorder, but we must encourage that voice to sound of truth, honesty, and integrity. It is in "personal narratives or exposition developed through personal testimony" that Faigley (1989) believes the most "authentic voice" is disclosed (pp. 403-404). Students must speak with the knowledge they possess, the knowledge which is authentic, before they can begin to explore that which they do not know. In the attempt to move from subjective to objective, from personal to public, students may only find and use their voice by first discovering what they already know (Brooke, 1991; Raymond, 1990). They then will be capable of coming "to understand how personal and objective knowledge interact" (Kelder, 1986, p. 8). Personal knowledge, or understanding of self, must be subsumed in the learning process before abstract, detached, objective knowledge can be firstly introduced, and secondly embodied in the whole of education. "Not surprisingly, the data clearly suggests a strong and consistent relationship between topic-specific background knowledge and the quality of students' writing" (Applebee, 1984, p. 146). Students must begin with what is real to them if they wish to write well. In simplest terms, they must start with their own existence.

Once the bona fide platform of "self" has been built, students may begin to explore. Meaningfulness must be incorporated into each quest for more knowledge if growth is to continue. "Like any social activity, writing does not have meaning or value in itself. Rather human beings assign it value (for self, for the community)

when it helps them position themselves relative to one another in ways which are important to them, when it helps them understand and interact with their community" (Brooke, 1991, pp. 5-6). Meaning is made through a connection between self and experience. Without meaning, learning is pointless, and more often than not, learning may not even occur. "The more meaningful writing is to an individual, the more optimal a learning experience it will be; and the less meaningful it is the less it will challenge the writer and aid his or her growth into being a more complex individual" (Smagorinsky, 1986, p. 108). As readers can recall what they read only when individual idea units are associated with or connected to a coherent whole (Kintsch, 1978) it seems to follow that writers can only write with meaning when various idea units are connected to a logically consistent whole; that whole being the one thing that students truly understand -- their "self." "The natural subject to turn to -- the *only* subject about which most students know more than a few threadbare (or misremembered) facts -- is personal experience" (Connors, 1987, p. 179). The inclusion of personal relativity in an educational process virtually guarantees that true learning will occur. Without the investment of self, knowledge is unconnected and eventually discarded. Only meaningful knowledge is proven to establish retention on a long term basis (Fetterolf, 1981, p. 67), therefore increasing the tendencies for horizontal (from class to class) and vertical (from year to year) transfer of skills. This learning is an essential foundation in the progression toward complexity. "When a particular student was able to translate a generalized task into a problem that was personally meaningful to him or her, the types of cognitive strategies used by the writer become increasingly sophisticated" (Sternglass, 1983, p. 4). With meaningfulness, along with intellectual stimulation,

comes commitment to task and ownership of product. "Right from the first day of Kindergarten students should use writing as a way to think about and give shape to their own ideas and concerns" (Atwell, 1987, p. 17). All facets of a student's life provide sum and substance to writing experiences. Educators must use this knowledge to their advantage. Allowing students to own their topics will force them to be dedicated to their own written experience as they are dedicated to ensuring their own survival. Forcing students to scrutinize issues which are not personally appropriate or useful encourages students to satisfy only the demands to the teachers, negating the desire and the process of learning. Consequently, writers become marginalized by this act of kowtowing. Appearing to be an innocent attempt to pacify authority "the most serious danger is that students, in trying to please, relinquish ownership of their writing" (Freedman, 1987, p. 90). Not only are commitment and understanding increased when students use their I-voices, but the use of personal expression, as a mode of learning, promotes intellectual growth.

In the discipline of reading, comprehension is defined as "an active process to which each reader brings his or her individual attitudes, interests, expectations, skills, and prior knowledge" (Irwin, 1991, p. 7). The same operative procedure must be utilized in writing. There needs to be personal connections created between what is textually produced and the self. If curriculums were constructed as such, writing could become "one of the most powerful tools for developing comprehension because it can actively involve the reader in constructing a set of meanings that are useful to the individual reader" (Irwin, 1991, p. 24). Comprehension of language and literature can also be more effective with the utilization of an I-voice as it results in reduced cognitive overload. Many times, students, especially poor writers, become encumbered

in their attempts to generate, organize, and formalize ideas or concepts. They have too many writing concerns to concentrate on at once. Rose (1981) suggests that fundamentally competent writers might not be stymied by emotional difficulties, but by cognitive limitations and writing problems such as rigid composition rules (p. 1520). This experience is not particular to poor writers, but is felt by all writers who are experimenting in a new discourse.

I perceive cognitive overload to be similar to what I experience when caught in a traffic jam. Motoring down the highway, my one objective is to arrive at my destination. Achieving this objective does not seem exceedingly difficult, just stay on the road, follow directions, and keep the speed under 65 miles per hour. But things do not always flow so smoothly. On occasion my driving is influenced by outside repercussions. Looking ahead, the outstretched highway no longer disappears into the horizon, but transforms into a congestion of angry taillights, fuming exhaust pipes, and screeching horns. Instantly, all progress is stopped. Frustration sets in as cars creep along at walking speed, my lane always moving the slowest. Temporary delays I soon forget. But when it seems like I'm not going anywhere, I search for the closest exit and get off. Why does everybody have to be on the highway at the same time? Can't we take turns so that people actually get somewhere when they are driving?

When writers experience a traffic jam of thought, or cognitive overload, they react in much the same way. Their progress slows down, they become frustrated, and eventually, they bail out. I-voices are one way to reduce the congestion of thought which so often occurs. It creates a writing situation where not all aspects of writing are placed in first priority, giving students the opportunity to "take turns"

integrating a few essential concepts, not processing everything at once. Writing tasks become appropriate for students' ability levels. I-voice approaches insure that assignments are within an individual's "zone of proximal development" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 84), as they create tasks which are still sufficiently challenging, but that will be successfully completed. Most writers would admit that it is easier to write about things that they know about or experiences that they have gone through (Cleary, 1991; Wershoven, 1991). They had one less thing to divide their cognitive attention. I-voices would also equalize the differentiation of intellectual stages of development indicated by Beach's (1987) social cognitive developmental research. His study of the differences between early adolescents, late adolescents, and adults, indicated that the varying levels of cognitive development were manifested in the themes and styles utilized by each group. Accommodation of these tendencies through I-voices would allow the focus of stages of developmental writing to be placed on content not construct. All writers would benefit from the reduction of stress generated by demands of formation and message perfection. Allowing writers to speak about what they know grants them the ability to concentrate on what they do not know. I-voices would simplify the writing process enough so that the development was not barred or retarded, permitting students to focus on truer concerns of written construction -- format, procedure, grammar, etc. "If all students (ESL and others) could focus on language as a social and meaningful activity, if they were shown possible ways to keep their writing process simple enough at any one stage so that overload would not occur, if they wrote about subjects that held their interest, to comfortable audiences, and for self-selected and real purposes, they would have inner inclinations to write, and the overwhelming struggle inherent in a complex process would be eased" (Cleary, 1991,

p. 144). I-voices is one means to alleviate the intricacies involved in the construction of meaning.

Seeing the distinctions. The second step in the process of removing tape from students' mouths is to compare writing which incorporates an I-voice with other modes of written communication. Ian Pringle and Aviva Freedman (1985) completed a comparative analysis of transactional and narrative writing. Among recommendations for creating assignments which corresponded to the cognitive ability levels of students, they also concluded that "student developed most fully in their presentation and exploration of self in the personal stories" (p. 126). James Marshall (1987), in his research on writing, examines the effects of writing modes -- restricted, personal analytical, formal analytical -- on literary understanding. Both the naturally occurring and the manipulated aspects of his case study led him to the conclusion that "personal analytical writing was as powerful as the more familiar formal analytical writing in helping Foster's students to develop their understanding of the short stories" (Marshall, 1987, p. 58). Despite the fact that each style of written expression evoked different types of reactions, final outcomes were basically identical. Much of Marshall's (1987) findings reiterate theories of reading processes, like Rosenblatt's (1978), and reinforce the students' need to input their self in their work. Restricted and formal analytic assignments denied students access into their topics. They "led the students to assume, perhaps prematurely, an authoritative certainty with regard to the stories' meanings" (Marshall, 1987, p. 59). Restricted and formal analytic assignments implied to students that there was one correct reading of the true text, personal responses were discounted. "In their personal analytic writing, on the other hand, the students drew upon the text, but

also upon their own histories and reactions. The personal assignments apparently gave them the scope to include both reader and text in their arguments" (Marshall, 1986, p. 52). Allowing students to use their identity as a starting place for developing an understanding of literature, students seemed able to create a more complete relationship with the text. The "rigid and formulaic" constructs of restricted and formal analysis also denied students growth, as information was able to be merely "slot in" in compliance to rules (Applebee, 1984, p. 102). Such a stringent process of composition curbs the development of skills. Students, instead, become content with the simple and safe style of restricted and formal analytic tasks. Students believe that it is much safer to hold one bird in their hands, ignoring those in the bushes: they neglect to realize that safety limits their ability to progress and eventually clutch all the birds. Personal analytic writing encouraged risks, exploration, and the production of language in students' own style, as "they took a different approach to the material" (Marshall, 1987, p. 52). The personal analytic mode complied with the expectations set in the more formal approaches, and additionally fostered other elements necessary for true evolvement of writing abilities. Marshall's (1987) advocation of personal analytic writing prefaces Ken Macrorie's (1988) theory of I-search papers.

Macrorie's (1988) creation of the I-search format is a direct reaction to the premises of what educators believe to be the most scholarly form of academic writing completed by students -- the research paper:

> In these ridiculous research projects, students are trapped on a two sided loop. Teachers assign them the job to teach them how to use the library and learn scholarly forms of documentation (hoping, usually vainly, that also the students will search for and find something valuable to them and others), and so the students produce papers no one want to read. They're inside the loop with the teachers and their interest in *form;* outside the loop stand human beings who

> might be interested in the results of a genuine search. Since nobody apparently wants to know what is being *said* by the writers of these research papers, they say what amounts to nothing.
>
> (Macrorie, 1988, p. 164)

The traditional research papers, which apparently mummify students under band of tape, when used as means to teach library and documentations skills inculcate nothing but perhaps a little plagiarism. They are "often unconnected to any writing purpose beyond amassing brute facts for regurgitation. . ." (Connors, 1987, p. 178). They marginalize students, offering no viable input for personal expression, and more often than not, produce cognitive overload due to the abundance of writing statues, difficult reading materials, and greater demands of length and sophistication. If we wish students to have skill in copying from different sources, in imitating the writing they see, then it is not necessary for them to invest themselves in their research. If, however, we want them to learn and understand through their inquests, students must instill their identity into their work, and they must allow the products to reflect and be incorporated into their lives. Instead of skills and formats as the primary focus for instruction, educators need to redirect their concerns and begin teaching students how to use their minds and how to use writing to express their thoughts. I-search papers accomplish this objective by incorporating students' I-voices. What students have to say and how they came to that statement becomes the most important aspect of research and learning. In I-search papers "a person conducts a search to find out something he needs to know for his own life and writes a story of his adventure" (Macrorie, 1988, preface). The self of the writer becomes central, and the I-voice is utilized to accentuate this pivotal point. Contextual aspects become marginal during the process. This is not to say they are seen as trivial or

discounted completely. Formal aspects of essay construction receive attention after the ideas have reached a stage of maturity. Stages of paper development "take turns" being in the spotlight so that cognitive overload can be avoided. Given that "personal analytic and formal analytic writing had generally comparable effects, in spite of the different kinds of responses encouraged by the two tasks, and in spite of an instructional context which discourages a personal approach to literature," (Marshall, 1986, p. 58) it seems not only foolish, but negates any justice in education, for teachers to insist on incorporating only formal writing assignments in any given curriculum.

Seeing the whole picture. The third step necessary in the tape-removing process is to examine the outcomes of omitting or employing the I-voice in writing, and to predict how these outcomes would shape society. Omitting the few remnants of the I-voice from today's curriculum would marginalize students to a greater degree. The only voice which would be heard would be that of the authority: that of the teacher. Thus the educational process would be characterized by lectures and recitation. Writing assignments would include designated specific topics, length, formal construct, and demand completion by a predetermined date. Students seemingly would be processed for four years in an assembly-line style of education, and then released to brave the world.

If personal experiences and I-voice writing were to be continually belittled in school systems, eventually they may hold no value in any part of society. Ayn Rand (1946), in her novelette *Anthem,* explores a future world where people are denied by law the right to express themselves. This abnegation of personal voice is reinforced by the abolishment of the word "I." Individuality is nonexistence.

It is a sin to write this. It is a sin to think words no others are to see. It

> is base and evil. It is as if we [meaning I, but it is no longer part of the narrator's language] were speaking alone to no ears but our own. And we know well that there is no transgression blacker than to do or think alone. We have broken laws. The laws say that men may not write unless the Council of Vocations bid them so. May we be forgiven."
>
> (Rand, 1946, p. 11)

Hopefully this frightening portrayal of the future will never become a reality. Yet despite the unimaginable hereafter Rand (1946) portrays, many of her anxieties about the individualist perspective echo the frustrations stated by students: what they wish to do, speak for themselves, is forbidden by scholastic "law." Denial of voice establishes a feeling that personal input is unimportant. Students are not allowed to explore, develop, and use their voice. As a result, no one listens: no one speaks: individuality atrophies.

Employment of the I-voice in writing assignments prophesies a more productive learning environment for schools. Most importantly, it allows students to be centralized. Ergo, the learning process becomes a more balanced distribution of give and take. Writing assignments would be more authentic, meaningful, and sophisticated while becoming less of a cognitive burden. Personal input could step into the spotlight while formal and objective constraints would take a back seat to the development of ideas. Assembly-line production of students would be replaced with learning experiences where "the teacher determines the type of problem the students will solve, teaches them strategies to help them arrive at solutions to a given task, and ultimately challenges them individually to perform tasks of the same type but using unfamiliar materials" (Smagorinsky, 1986, p. 115). Education would becomes a systemization of Hillock's (1986) environmental mode of instruction.

The Environmental mode of instruction lies somewhere in the middle of the continua

which is defined on one end by the extensive writing mode; all writing characterized by the process of transmitting information is an objective formal format; and on the other end, reflective writing; distinguished by it eminent exploration of personal feelings and experiences, which often is constructed only for the eyes of the writer (Smagorinsky, 1986). Selecting the best both instructional modes had to offer, the environmental approach encompasses four primary assumptions:

> One is that teaching can and should actively seek to develop identifiable skills in learners. A second is that these skills are developed by using them orally before using them in writing. A third assumption is that one major function of a prewriting activity is to develop those skills. A fourth assumption is that the use of such skills (e.g., generating criteria to define a concept) is often complex, and therefore may require collaboration with and feedback from others."
> (Hillocks, 1986, p. 125)

The utilization of students' I-voice is consequential to the success of this educational approach. While the development and mastery of skills depend upon the students' fluidity of articulation, the first step in progressing to a written form of expression should retain aspects of the oral discourse; it should allow the learner to speak with a personal voice, an I-voice. Knowing that as students attempt to untangle traffic-jammed thoughts they may require assistance, or need to collaborate, employment of I-voices may provide the mutual ground for effective instructional scaffolding to occur.

"Scaffolding is a form of assistance provided when students cannot use a strategy independently" (Irwin, 1991, p. 23). It establishes a balance between the influence of the teacher and the position held by the student by allowing each to be an expert at some time, but not all the time. If I-voices are incorporated as a style of scaffolding, students' development may progress more easily on a continuum of

independence. Both the communicator and the receiver of knowledge have a control over the information to being learned. A teacher may govern the choices of new materials to be studied: a student would donate his/her prior knowledge, values, and experiences to the learning process, and find the personal relevance in the strategies taught, expressing them through their I-voice. Utilizing the I-voice will also allow teachers to adjust task appropriateness without threatening the student as that student still retains an element of control. Both teacher and student can acutely focus on the "how to" instruction, as interference from perplexing interpretation of context or subject are devoid. A student's self, after all, is what (s)he knows best. When students begin the learning process with internalized knowledge -- their personal experiences expressed through I-voices -- and then attach to them meaning discovered in strategies, these skills will be more easily incorporated within the self and will ameliorate long term memory due to associations with previously stored experiences (Fetterolf, 1981). Additionally, the ambiguity of a student's I-voice writings reduce the teacher's role as evaluator: each writing of a student's will be characterized by personal experience that is neither right nor wrong. Once students stop being afraid of speaking on their own, once students cease to tell teachers what they believe teachers wish to hear, then maybe students will begin to dazzle us with what they wish to say.

I-voice, like instructional scaffolding, must always exist in the state of permanent temporality. That, is, both are only interim support systems, foundations and frames, but are not to be confused with the magnificent and massive structure which is always under construction: the building of meaning. Once a student has developed a voice, then (s)he must begin to explore the various written discourses.

They must advance from their first words to becoming responsible for knowing how and when to speak.

Seeing With An I

It is no secret that the more one writes, the more writing improves. Nulla dies sine linea, the Roman used to say: not a day without a line. I-voices, incorporated into composition assignments may be one way for teachers to reduce writing malcontent, to get students to write more often and more freely. Giving students a right to have and use a personal voice fosters meaningfulness, ownership, appropriate levels of cognitive demands, and writing skills which may be utilized in all facets of learning both within the school system and within the constructs of society. Allowing the identity of a student to define the process of making meaning encourages writers to take risks, to explore, and to determine realms of personal reality. It permits students to be experts, but at the same time, to ask for and receive assistance in a productive and non-threatening way. I-voices not only remove the tape from the mouths of muted students, but it also eliminates the blindfold from their eyes. Seeing with an I broadens the scope of students' vision, allowing a larger perspective of the world with a personal space in it; giving them the ability to distinguish the ship drifting on the horizon, to discern its distress signals, and to shout in a confident voice that soon all occupants will be saved. SOS.

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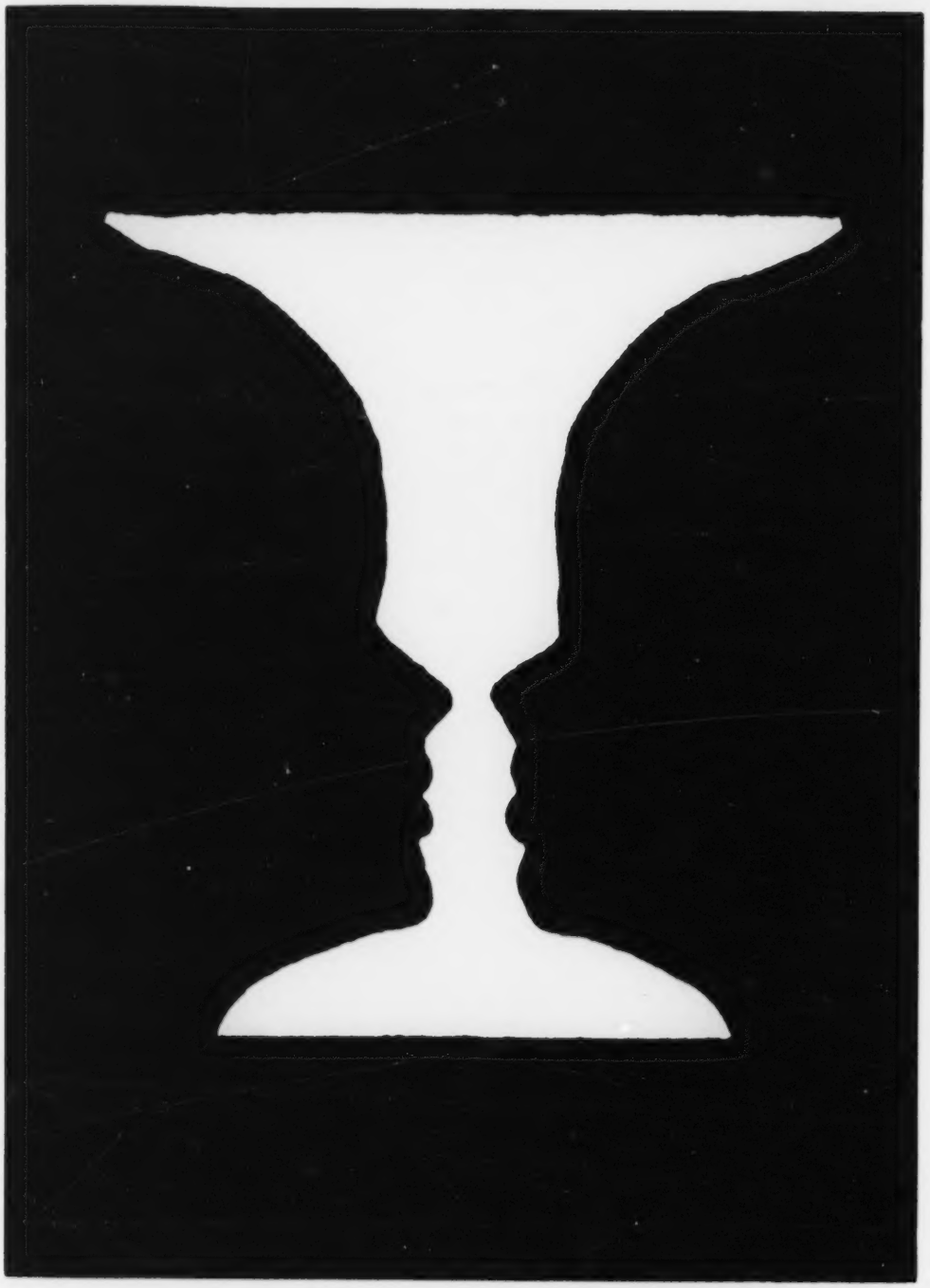
ILLUSTRATION A:



(Fetterolf, 1981, p. 121)

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